

SUMMARY OF COUNCILLORS` SUBMISSIONS - COUNCIL MEETING 10th NOVEMBER 2011

COUNCILLOR QUESTION S

1. Question from Councillor Liz Hardman

I have had several cases referred to me about late payment of Council tax. The most recent was today, 3rd November, where the householder hadn't paid his tax by November 1st. Although he had been late in paying his Council tax in the past 7 months, 3times, he had paid in full up to November. He received a summons today, 3rd November.

Has the policy changed regarding the issuing of a summons for late payment of Council tax?

Answer from Cabinet Member for Community Resources

The recovery procedure has not changed; the process is clearly set out in government legislation (The Administration and Enforcement Regulations 1992)

The initial demand notice (bill) is issued at the start of the year and sets out instalments to be paid by the 1st day of each month (unless a direct debit is set up, when instalments can be made on the 15th). If no payment is received a reminder notice is sent, these are sent after the 22nd of the month. (Three weeks after the due date)

Providing payment of the outstanding sum is made and then future instalments are paid on time no further recovery action will be taken. If no payment is made or if the payment is for an amount lower than the amount shown on the reminder then a summons will be issued (no sooner than 14 days after the issue of the reminder). At that time the balance of council tax plus costs of £55.00 becomes due.

If after the first reminder has been sent and paid a subsequent payment is missed a second reminder is sent. A maximum of two reminders are issued. The second reminder would only be issued to an account where the first reminder had been paid in full. If the amount on the second reminder is paid in full and all future instalments paid on time no further recovery action would be taken.

If no payment is made or if the payment is made for an amount lower than that on the second reminder then a summons would be issued (no sooner than 14 days after the issue of the second reminder).

If, after two reminders have been issued, and paid, a further instalment is missed then a final notice is sent. The final notice removes all instalments and the full balance of council tax due for the year becomes payable.

If the amount shown on the final notice is not paid, in full, then a summons will be issued.

It should be noted that we are always keen to speak to customers who have difficulty paying and will consider an alternative non statutory payment arrangement if the debtor is having financial difficulties. These arrangements can include additional payment dates or revised payment dates, but we do have to take in to account the impact on cash flow to the Council and fairness to all taxpayers in any such plans.

STATEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR WILL SANDRY – ‘HOUSING, THE INCONVENIENT TRUTH’

Mr Chairman,

I have reflected on our debate in September, and I have some thoughts that I would like to share with you.

I respect those councillors who stood up for their own communities in the core strategy debate, with the purpose of protecting their communities from housing development.

However, as I have reflected, on the meeting, I do not recall anyone, (myself included) speak up for members of our community who are currently living in sub-standard or cramped housing; on the housing list; those who are homeless and those who sleep rough. In my view, at our last meeting we failed to fully represent the needs and views of the broad community we represent.

The green belt means that the beautiful City of Bath is held in a green straight jacket. We have not expanded for 60 years; we have tried to work within that constraint, but bizarrely, we have allowed two major universities to develop and expand on our doorstep without sufficient student accommodation on campus.

I am not unhappy that the universities are here, they add much to the vibrance and vitality of the city, but I do feel that what was once a symbiotic relationship is now a parasitic one. The universities, continue to expand, and they are consuming our housing stock. We must continue to support any expansion of purpose built student accommodation on campus and in the city.

Not only has our housing stock come under pressure from the universities, the general population is increasing through immigration and there has been an increase in second home ownership.

My real concern that our core strategy will not provide enough affordable housing for the city, or for North East Somerset. Whilst I recognise the potential of the western riverside and the MoD sites, I also recognise that Bath and North East Somerset is a great place to live and that there are plenty of affluent people with both the means and intent to buy a second home in Bath, or to move here on retirement.

In my view, the inconvenient truth is that the housing we have allocated won't provide for those who need it.

We cannot avoid this issue and the debate needs to be had within the context of core strategy and long term plans.

One quick solution would be to increase our affordable housing thresholds from 35% to 50% and impose this on all schemes that have 5 or more houses rather than the current 14.

In addition to this we should work more closely with the Universities so that more purpose built student accommodation is built, reducing the pressure to convert family housing in to multiple occupancy lets.

There are solutions, and we must consider the housing needs of all our community.